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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to present an objective examination of the attitudes of seven key respondent groups towards the major issues surrounding television advertising and children. A mail questionnaire was used as the major research instrument for the initial survey, and personal interviews were used to gather data for the general public survey. Thirteen of the items in the survey loaded heavily on regulation and advertising as a profession dimensions. Responses showed differences among the groups on such issues as whether there should be more regulation of children's television advertising and who should do it, number of commercials, truth in advertising, the question of taste, advertising as a marketing tool, and advertisers as professionals. Differences were also observed in the section of the survey dealing with the co-orientation abilities of the consumer, industry, and government groups. The findings of this study indicate that the lack of effective interaction is not due to a lack of understanding; rather, there is a critical need for industry spokesmen to establish an effective dialogue with government representatives and consumer spokesmen. (VT)

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FINAL REPORT
PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION ADVERTISING: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES OF CONSUMER, INDUSTRY, AND GOVERNMENT RESPONDENTS

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January 1975

This paper is divided into two parts. The first part concentrates on the problem of measuring the effects of a complex stimulus like television on the child. The second part centers on the findings of a recent survey of the attitudes of key respondent groups regarding the subject of television advertising directed at children.

Part 1: Problems in Measuring the Impact of Television on the Child

Since the early 1950's, numerous articles have been written about the effects of television programs on the child. Until three or four years ago, however, the subject of the effects of television advertising on the child was almost completely ignored. Schramm, Lyle, and Parker's study of television and children and Tannenbaum and Greenberg's study of recent mass communication research are two cases in point.[1] Both studies are major sources of information for researchers interested in the effects of television on the child. However, both completely ignore the subject of television commercials and their effects on children.

From twelve to sixteen minutes of every hour of children's television is devoted to commercial messages. These messages are primarily aimed at selling products rather than entertaining the viewer. Moreover, the commercial sponsorship system largely determines what type of products will be aired on children's television. With so much time devoted to commercial messages and with the commercial sponsorship system so much a part of the present system of children's

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[1] Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin Parker, *Television in the Lives of Our Children* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961); Percy H. Tannenbaum and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Mass Communications," *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 1968, Vol. 19, pp. 351-386.

programming, why have researchers avoided examining the subject of television advertising's effect on children?

The Control Group Problem

Just the problem of finding an adequate control group points out the problem. In the early sixties, Schramm *et al.* found it virtually impossible to find a town of 2,000 or more people in the United States without television to act as a control group in their study of the effects of television on the lives of children.[2] Even in isolated communities where less than 20 percent of the homes in the town had television, they found that television-less children found a way to see quite a bit of television. Now, more than a decade later, it is doubtful if two such communities exist anywhere in North America.

The Longitudinal Problem

Ideally, the researcher hopes to measure whether or not some particular effect does or does not occur. In reality, the relationship between mass media advertising and human behavior is far too complex for simple cause-effect type studies.

A research subject who shows an immediate change after a mass media stimulus may be reacting to some prior stimulus, or the impact of a particular stimulus may be only temporary with little or no carry-over into real life. It is also conceivable that, after repeated exposure to the same stimulus, the research subject may show little reaction to the original stimulus.

To test the long-term effects of a television show, series of shows, or

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[2]Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin Parker. *Television in the Lives of Our Children*. Stanford University Press, 1961.

television advertising campaign, it might be necessary to follow the subject for many years. For example, some psychologists believe that it is necessary to study three generations in order to examine the effects of a specific child-rearing practice, such as toilet training. First, one must study the parents who are carrying out the specific toilet-training technique. Then, one studies the child who has been toilet trained. And finally, one studies how the original child trains his own children and how they develop.[3]

Even if it were possible for a researcher to draw a matched sample of research subjects and control the variables available to each over a long period of time, the practical difficulties of conducting such a study would prove virtually insurmountable. For instance, there would be little chance of controlling the exposure patterns of the various research subjects effectively.

The Experimental Situation Problem

Many of the studies that have been done on the impact of television in early childhood are based on experiments in special playrooms which are strange to the child. Researchers have found that the things children learn and the ways they behave in such settings are often quite different from learning and behavior patterns occurring in the child's home.[4]

To some extent, such variations in background conditions can be reduced by a research design which uses an adequate number of subjects and randomly assigns them to the various treatment conditions. But when experimental

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[3]See W. Kessen, "Research Design in the Study of Developmental Problems," in *Handbook of Research Methods in Child Development*, edited by P. H. Mussen (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960), pp. 36-70.

[4]See Albert Bandura's discussion of research on children's imitation and identification with others in "Social-learning Theory of Identification Processes," *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, edited by David A. Goslin (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 213-262.

studies are extrapolated to real life situations, other factors interfere with the results. For example, when a young child is feeling strong and confident he is probably not so likely to confuse fantasy with reality.[5] Thus, the preschool child whose mother is in the house may watch a television program or commercial with more detachment or aplomb than when the mother is not present and the child is uncertain that he is being well cared for.

The Problem of Measurement

Even the seemingly simple task of recording accurately what television programs and advertising a child has been exposed to is a vexing one. Schramm *et al.* found that the use of the six common ways of estimating children's television viewing behavior[6] could result in six different estimates of just what programs and commercials a child was exposed to.[7] In-home camera studies have suggested a reason for such a variety of viewing estimates. Films of subjects' viewing behavior have shown that many subjects count programs they view only sporadically or partially as full-time viewing. What comprises viewing? If a subject is listening to a program, is that viewing? Must the subject's eyes be on the television for the researcher to say the subject was "viewing" the program? (How many times have we found ourselves staring at the television while our minds were far away?)

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[5]Carl I. Hovland, "Reconciling Conflicting Results Derived from Experimental and Survey Studies of Attitude Change," *The American Psychologist*, Vol. 14 (January, 1959), pp. 8-17.

[6]The six common ways are: a general estimate by the parent, a general estimate by the child, a supervised diary, an unsupervised diary, aided recall, and unaided recall.

[7]Schramm *et al.*, *Ibid.*, pp. 213-218.

The Problem of Definition

There is at present no adequate conceptual framework within which the diverse types of effects reported can be classified. Besides distinguishing between "long-term" effects and "short-term" effects, some authors distinguish between effects which are "manifest" and those which are "latent."[8] Distinctions are also made among psychological, political, economic, and sociological effects. Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell distinguish between "intended" and "unintended" effects.[9]

The use of the various methods of classification may seem arbitrary and artificial. It does, however, highlight the fact that "effects" can only be artificially abstracted from behavior. Thus, one cannot talk about *the* effects but only about particular sets of responses selected for study. For example, the major networks tend to evaluate the "effectiveness" of their shows in entertainment terms by relying heavily on rating services to describe the size of the audience reached.

The Problem with Attitude Studies

Some researchers have attempted to circumvent the problems involved in measuring effects directly by interviewing segments of the public familiar with children, such as mothers of small children and teachers.[10] Unfortunately,

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[8]See Harold H. Kassarjian and Thomas S. Robertson, *Perspectives in Consumer Behavior*, rev. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman and Company, 1968), p. 101.

[9]See James F. Engel; David T. Kollat; and Roger D. Blackwell, *Consumer Behavior*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 309.

[10]Few such studies contain questions specifically related to the effects of commercials on children. Among those that do are: the Yankelovich (1970) study of mothers' attitudes toward children's television programs and advertising; the *Parade* magazine study of readers' attitudes towards children's television advertising (see F. Earle Barcus, *Concerned Parents Speak Out on Children's Television* [Boston: Action for Children's Television, 1973]); and the Roper opinion polls conducted for the Television Information Office (see Burns W. Roper, *An Extended View of Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media: 1959-1971* [New York: Television Information Office, 1971]).

such research may be unreliable since the subjects tend to be influenced by their own attitudes and are often poor judges of the attitudes of others. For example, Himmelweit *et al.* found that mothers tended to underestimate the amount of time their children viewed television and were rarely familiar with their children's viewing preferences. They concluded that mothers tended to belittle the effects of television since any changes might reflect adversely on their maternal capabilities. They also found that teachers' reports lacked objectivity. Too often, teachers assessed changes brought about by television in the light of their own overall attitudes toward the subject.[11]

Nevertheless, in an economy such as ours, where decisions are frequently based on opinion polls and majority rule, certain types of attitude studies may be immensely useful. For example, to the critic concerned with the extent to which "everybody sees the necessity of increased regulation of children's television advertising," an attitudinal study would indicate whether this concern was at least partly justified.

Part 2: How Key Respondent Groups Measure the Problem

Although there exists a large number of studies focusing on the general public's attitudes towards advertising as a marketing tool, in only a few cases has an attempt been made to deal with areas of specific concern to those interested in children's television advertising. Moreover, a survey of the literature revealed practically no attitude studies of the key people involved in the creation, production, research, and evaluation of advertising directed

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[11]Hilde Himmelweit, A. N. Oppenheim, and Pamela Vince, *Television and the Child: An Empirical Study of the Effects of Television on the Young* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

at children.[12] Yet, these people are among the best sources of information on the various issues involved, the ones most likely to influence and to be influenced by policy decisions in the area, and the expert opinion leaders for much of the general public on the subject.

The purpose of this research study was to present an objective examination of the attitudes of seven key respondent groups towards the major issues surrounding the subject of children's television advertising. The seven groups included in the study were:

Action for Children's Television Spokesmen (ACT). This Boston based consumer group has had considerable success in petitioning the Federal Communication Commission and the Federal Trade Commission for changes in present policies regarding children's television advertising. ACT has also been successful in raising money for research on the subject of children's television and children's television advertising and in influencing public opinion on the major issues involved with children's television advertising. A judgment sample of sixty ACT spokesmen was selected for the survey by the founders of ACT; eighty-five percent of the sample completed the survey.

Advertising Agency Executives. Much of the criticism of children's television advertising has to do with the techniques and the content of commercials aimed at children. In this study, 107 presidents and top executive officers of twenty-four advertising agencies that create, produce, and buy broadcast time on children's television programs were sent copies of the survey. Sixty-six percent completed the questionnaire. In gathering preliminary data for the study, personal interviews were also conducted with the top executives at

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[12]When children's television is referred to in this report, it means regularly scheduled network programs for which children make up the largest percentage of the viewing audience. "Children" designates any individual aged 12 or younger. Most network programs on Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and The Captain Kangaroo Show weekdays on CBS would, therefore, be considered children's television shows.

ten of the twenty-four agencies included in the final survey.

Top Advertisers. There is a great variety of products advertised on children's television, but most fall into one of four categories: toys, cereals, candies, and other food items. In this study, seventy-five copies of the final questionnaire were mailed to the presidents and top executive officers of thirty firms sponsoring shows, or frequently running commercials, on network children's television. Forty-five percent of the sample mailed back usable questionnaires.

Members of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Federal Communication Commission (FCC), and Key Members of Congress. A judgment sample of forty-nine congressmen was included in the government sample. These congressmen were selected because of their expressed interest in and voting record on consumer causes. In addition, fifteen commissioners and top staff officers of the FTC and the FCC were included in the sample. Sixty-six percent of the government sample responded to the survey, but only thirty-four percent of the sample sent back completed questionnaires. (Note: special care should be taken in interpreting the responses of the government sample. For one thing, the sample was a biased one. That is, only those congressmen considered "liberal" by their colleagues and likely to help draft legislation regarding children's television advertising were included in the survey. Moreover, only thirty-four percent of the sample returned usable questionnaires.)

Members of the Network Review Boards. Major gatekeepers for all commercials destined for airing on network television are the network review or continuity boards. Though the number of people on these boards is small, the board members hold a major position in determining what is or is not acceptable for showing on the networks. Thirteen review board members from the three major networks were mailed copies of the survey, but only six responded.

Due to the small size of the sample group and the low response rate, no statistical analyses using the review board sample were attempted.

College Students and the General Public. Several months after the five respondent groups listed above were surveyed by the author, Professors Frank N. Pierce and Leonard J. Hooper of the University of Florida surveyed a random sample of 455 townspeople and 445 college students in Gainesville, Florida, using portions of the author's questionnaire. These two respondent groups were surveyed by personal interview rather than by mail.[13]

The Final Survey Form

A mail questionnaire was used as the major research instrument for the initial survey and personal interviews were used to gather data for the general public survey. Both surveys contained a number of Likert-type attitudinal items designed to test the variance within and mean difference between the responses of the surveyed groups.

Six general hypotheses and twenty-two research hypotheses were included in the study. All the general hypotheses and seventeen of the research hypotheses concerned the following topics: (1) the need for regulation of children's television advertising; (2) the method of regulating children's television advertising; (3) the effects of television commercials on children; (4) the techniques used in commercials aired on children's television; (5) the products advertised on children's television; and (6) major proposals regarding the future of children's television advertising. Five research hypotheses con-

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[13]For more information on this survey see: Frank N. Pierce, Leonard J. Hooper, and James D. Culley, "Perceptions of Television Advertising Directed at Children: An Investigation of the Views of an Entire Community." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Advertising Division of the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ), San Diego, California, August 18-21, 1974. Copies of this paper may be obtained by writing Dr. Culley, College of Business and Economics, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware 19711.

cerned the ability of the individuals involved with children's television advertising to interact effectively on the issues involved.

Two mailings of the initial survey were made. The first mailing was made June 12, 1973. The follow-up mailing, sent to all respondents failing or refusing to complete the initial questionnaire, was made one month later. The student and townspeople interviews were conducted in late April and early May, 1974.

T-tests, analysis of variance tests, and Duncan range tests were the basic statistical tools used in the analyses.

Major Findings

Although six major issues were covered in the survey, thirteen of the twenty-nine items in the survey loaded heavily on two dimensions: the regulation dimension and the advertising as a profession dimension. The study findings relating to these two dimensions and the findings relating to the co-orientation section of the survey are the subject of the remainder of this paper. The nineteen other items used in the survey are listed in the Appendix to this report.

The Need For More Regulation

The issue of whether there should be more regulation of children's television commercials divided the respondents into two distinct groups. All of the ACT sample, over ninety percent of the government sample, and over sixty-five percent of the student and townspeople samples agreed that television advertising to children should be more regulated than it already is. Sixty-six percent of the agency sample and eighty-five percent of the advertiser sample disagreed with the item: "television advertising to children should be more regulated than it already is."

All six respondent groups agreed that special regulation of children's television advertising was required because of the nature of the viewing audience. There were significant differences, however, in the strength of their agreement. Over fifty percent of the Hooper-Pierce sample and over eighty percent of the ACT sample indicated "strong agreement" with the item. Less than ten percent of the industry samples indicated "strong agreement."

Item 1: Television advertising to children should be more regulated than it already is.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean[14]
Students	31.7%	37.3%	10.3%	14.6%	6.1%	445	3.7
Townspeople	49.0	27.7	12.1	9.0	2.2	455	4.0
Agency	4.3	18.6	11.4	44.3	21.4	71	2.4
Advertiser	2.9	5.9	5.9	58.8	26.5	34	2.0
ACT	90.9	9.1	--	--	--	51	4.9
Government	40.9	50.0	--	9.1	--	22	4.2

Item 15: Children's television advertising requires *special* regulation because of the nature of the viewing audience.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	49.0%	41.3%	3.2	4.9%	1.6%	445	4.3
Townspeople	56.3	33.2	5.4	3.3	1.8	455	4.4
Agency	8.6	52.9	7.1	20.0	11.4	71	3.3
Advertiser	8.8	47.1	11.8	23.5	8.8	34	3.2
ACT	84.1	13.6	2.3	--	--	51	4.8
Government	27.3	59.1	4.5	9.1	--	22	4.1

Who should regulate? Items 4, 16, and 18 on the survey referred specifically to the issue of how to regulate television advertising directed at children.

Over sixty percent of the respondents in the industry samples favored self-regulation. A majority of the student and townspeople samples agreed. The government sample favored self-regulation but over sixty percent of the sample

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[14]Scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned to the 5 response categories from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Mean scores therefore could range from 1.0 to 5.0. The higher the mean score, the more group agreement with the item as stated.

felt the trade association guidelines in use today have done little to improve the quality of children's television advertising.

Over seventy percent of the agency sample and all of the advertiser sample felt the trade association guidelines have helped improve the quality of commercials aimed at children.

Seventy percent of the ACT sample felt that commercials to children should be regulated by the government instead of by advertisers.

Item 4: Commercials to children should be regulated by advertisers themselves.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	26.5%	36.0%	10.5%	20.7%	6.3%	445	3.5
Townspeople	27.5	26.2	12.2	22.9	11.2	455	3.4
Agency	20.6	42.6	5.9	22.1	8.8	71	3.4
Advertiser	11.8	55.9	11.7	20.6	--	34	3.6
ACT	4.5	9.1	4.6	13.6	68.2	51	1.7
Government	4.5	18.2	4.6	54.5	18.2	22	2.4

Item 16: The trade association guidelines in use today have done *little* to improve the quality of children's television advertising.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	12.1%	25.4%	29.9%	28.3%	4.3%	445	3.1
Townspeople	20.7	23.5	30.1	20.2	5.5	455	3.3
Agency	--	15.7	11.3	40.0	32.9	71	2.1
Advertiser	--	--	--	67.6	32.4	34	1.7
ACT	61.4	36.4	2.2	--	--	51	4.6
Government	4.5	59.1	22.8	13.6	--	22	3.5

Item 18: Commercials to children should be regulated by *the government*.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	8.8%	21.6%	6.6%	30.6%	32.4%	445	2.0
Townspeople	10.3	20.2	10.2	25.7	33.6	455	2.5
Agency	2.9	8.6	4.2	30.0	54.3	71	1.8
Advertiser	--	11.8	2.9	44.1	41.2	34	1.9
ACT	38.6	31.8	11.5	13.6	4.5	51	3.9
Government	18.2	31.8	31.9	13.6	4.5	22	3.5

The matter of numbers. Over half of all seven respondent groups felt there are too many commercials on shows children watch. There were significant differences, however, in the strength of their agreement. For example, ninety-three percent of the ACT respondents and fifty percent of the government respondents marked "Strongly Agree" on the item. Only twelve percent of the agency sample and none of the advertiser sample marked the "Strongly Agree" category.

Eighty-nine percent of the ACT respondents favored banning all commercials from children's television programs. Less than half the student, townspeople, agency, advertiser, and government samples agreed.

Item 6: There are too many commercials on shows children watch.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	29.0%	36.2%	15.9%	15.5%	3.4%	445	3.7
Townspeople	43.1	27.7	14.5	10.5	4.2	455	4.0
Agency	11.8	38.2	5.9	33.8	10.3	71	3.1
Advertiser	--	50.0	9.4	37.5	3.1	34	3.1
ACT	93.2	6.8	--	--	--	51	4.9
Government	50.0	45.5	4.5	--	--	22	4.5

Item 22: Advertising on children's television programs should be banned *completely.*

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	7.9%	14.4%	5.4%	38.4%	33.9%	445	2.2
Townspeople	17.6	14.7	5.3	35.8	26.6	455	2.6
Agency	1.4	1.4	2.9	24.3	70.0	71	1.4
Advertiser	2.9	--	--	5.9	91.2	34	1.2
ACT	72.7	15.9	11.4	--	--	51	4.6
Government	13.6	22.7	31.9	31.8	--	22	3.2

The question of truth. Not one respondent of the ACT sample, less than ten percent of the government sample, and less than twenty percent of the student and townspeople samples felt children's television commercials present true pictures of the products advertised. Over sixty-five percent of the advertiser

sample and over seventy-five percent of the agency sample felt that they do.

Over eighty percent of the industry respondents felt that advertisers make a sincere effort to present their products truthfully. Less than half the student, townspeople, ACT, and government samples agreed.

Item 8: Most children's television commercials present a true picture of the product advertised.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	2.5%	16.0%	4.5%	41.3%	35.7%	445	2.1
Townspeople	5.1	14.9	9.0	34.3	36.7	455	2.2
Agency	10.0	57.1	18.6	11.4	2.9	71	3.6
Advertiser	14.7	61.8	14.7	8.8	--	34	3.8
ACT	--	--	--	25.0	75.0	51	1.3
Government	--	9.1	9.1	59.1	22.7	22	2.1

Item 19: Most advertisers on children's television make a *sincere effort* to present their product truthfully.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	1.3%	27.9%	7.2%	39.6%	24.0%	445	2.4
Townspeople	5.9	29.9	12.6	30.5	21.1	455	2.7
Agency	24.3	60.0	10.0	5.7	--	71	4.0
Advertiser	32.4	61.8	5.8	--	--	34	4.3
ACT	--	--	4.5	43.2	52.3	51	1.5
Government	--	13.6	27.3	50.0	9.1	22	2.5

The question of taste. Fifty-three percent of the Pierce-Hooper survey respondents agreed that most television commercials aimed at children are in good taste. Only one-third of the student and townspeople samples disagreed. Over seventy percent of both industry samples also agreed with the item.

At the other extreme on the taste dimension stood the ACT and government samples. Not one of the ACT respondents and only fourteen percent of the government respondents felt that commercials aimed at children are in good taste.

Item 11: Television commercials aimed at children are usually in good taste.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	10.3%	45.4%	11.3%	21.8%	11.2%	445	3.2
Townspeople	11.2	38.7	14.5	20.4	15.2	455	3.1
Agency	14.5	59.4	11.6	14.5	--	71	3.7
Advertiser	14.7	64.7	11.8	8.8	--	34	3.9
ACT	--	--	2.3	43.2	54.5	51	1.5
Government	--	13.6	9.2	54.5	22.7	22	2.1

Advertising as a marketing tool. Sixty-five percent of the agency respondents and seventy-one percent of the advertiser respondents felt that commercials help develop a child's ability to make good consumer decisions. Less than five percent of the ACT sample and less than twenty-five percent of the townspeople, student, and government samples agreed.

Item 2: Advertising helps develop a child's ability to make good consumer decisions.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	1.8%	17.5%	6.3%	41.1%	33.3%	445	2.1
Townspeople	7.3	20.2	8.9	28.4	35.2	455	2.4
Agency	10.3	54.4	17.7	14.7	2.9	71	3.5
Advertiser	5.9	64.7	20.6	8.8	--	34	3.7
ACT	2.3	--	2.2	20.5	75.0	51	1.4
Government	4.5	18.2	9.1	45.5	22.7	22	2.3

Advertisers as professionals. Over seventy percent of the student, townspeople, ACT, and government samples agreed with the statement: "Most advertisers on children's television are not really concerned about kids; they just want to sell their products.

Less than half the townspeople, student, ACT, and government samples felt advertisers were trying their best to provide what the public wants.

Item 26: Most advertisers are good people trying their best to provide what the public wants.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	3.6%	25.4%	6.7%	35.1%	29.2%	445	2.4
Townspeople	10.1	31.4	7.5	28.6	22.4	455	2.8
Agency	27.9	50.0	14.7	7.4	--	71	4.0
Advertiser	38.2	50.0	11.8	--	--	34	4.3
ACT	--	2.3	6.4	36.4	54.9	51	1.6
Government	--	31.8	31.8	36.4	--	22	3.0

Item 27: Most advertisers on children's television aren't really concerned about kids, they just want to sell their product.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Uncertain/ No Answer	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	# in Group	Mean
Students	34.6%	40.2%	5.7%	18.2%	1.3%	445	3.9
Townspeople	37.1	34.3	6.4	17.1	5.1	455	3.8
Agency	4.3	20.3	7.3	47.8	20.3	71	2.4
Advertiser	--	2.9	14.8	44.1	38.2	34	1.8
ACT	75.0	22.7	--	--	2.3	51	4.7
Government	4.5	72.7	4.6	18.2	--	22	3.6

The Co-orientation Abilities of the ACT, Agency, Advertiser And Government Samples

The initial mail survey was divided into two sections. The first section centered on the twenty-nine attitudinal items discussed up to now. The second section of the survey dealt specifically with the co-orientation abilities of the ACT, Agency, Advertiser, and Government samples.

The first relationship measured in this section concerned the amount of cognitive overlap, or similarity in attitudes of the various respondent groups.

On twenty-three of the twenty-nine items in the survey, the mean response of the two industry samples differed significantly from that of the ACT respondents. The items in which the direction of the mean scores of the industry and ACT respondent groups were the same are:

: There are too many commercials on shows children watch. (The agency, advertiser, and ACT respondents agreed.)

: Commercials often persuade children to want things they don't really need (The agency and ACT respondents agreed.)

: Performers should be allowed to sell products on children's television shows. (The agency, advertiser, and ACT respondents disagreed.)

: Simulcasts (permitting two or more networks to run the same program at the same time) would help improve the quality of children's television programming. (The agency, advertiser, and ACT respondents disagreed. However, nearly seventy percent of the ACT respondents marked "uncertain" on this item. It is doubtful whether the ACT respondents had heard of the simulcast proposal before.)

: Children's television advertising requires special regulation because of the nature of the viewing audience. (The agency, advertiser, and ACT respondents agreed.)

: It is up to the parents to regulate children's television viewing behavior. (The agency, advertiser, and ACT respondents agreed.)

The advertiser and agency respondents differed significantly in their attitudes on only four of the twenty-nine Likert-type items. In each case, the direction of agreement was the same: only the expressed strength of the responses differed. For example, on the statement, "Most advertisers on children's television aren't really concerned about kids, they just want to sell their products," both the agency and advertiser respondents expressed disagreement. However, while thirty-eight percent of the respondents from the advertiser sample expressed strong disagreement with the item, only twenty percent of the agency respondents did. A two-tail T-test comparing the sample means of the two groups did not support the hypothesis that the samples were drawn from the same population.

The other three items in which tests of the differences between the mean scores of the industry respondents were significant are:

: "Bunching" commercials before or after a program would significantly lessen the impact of the advertiser's message. (The respondents in the advertiser sample expressed stronger agreement than the respondents in the agency sample.)

: The trade association guidelines in use today have done little to improve the quality of children's television advertising. (The respondents in the advertiser sample expressed stronger disagreement than the respondents in the agency sample.)

: Television commercials lead to an increase in parent-child conflict. (The respondents in the advertiser sample expressed stronger disagreement than the respondents in the agency sample.)

The second relationship measured in the co-orientation section of the survey dealt with the *accuracy* of the respondents in estimating the position of other respondents on the items included in the co-orientation section of the survey. Five different data sets were used in testing respondent accuracy: the ACT respondents' estimates of the agency position, the agency respondents' estimates of the ACT position, the advertiser respondents' estimates of the ACT position, and the government respondents' estimates of the ACT position.

Only the data from the ACT respondents' estimates of the agency position supported the hypothesis that the accuracy of each respondent group will be relatively low in estimating the position of other groups on issues relating to children's television advertising.

The third relationship measured in the co-orientation section of the survey dealt with the *perceived cognitive overlap* or extent to which each respondent thought his beliefs were the same as other participants completing the survey. The actual position of the agency sample differed significantly from its perception of the ACT position on all nine co-orientation items. But there was no significant difference between the actual agency position and its perception of the network position on six of the nine items.

The actual position of the advertiser respondents differed significantly from their estimate of the ACT respondents' position on all nine items. But there was no significant difference between the agency respondents' position and their perception of the network respondents' position on six of the nine co-orientation items.

The position of the ACT respondents differed significantly from their estimate of the network respondents' and agency respondents' positions on all nine co-orientation items. The position of the government respondents differed

significantly from their estimate of the ACT respondents' position on four of the nine co-orientation items. The position of the government respondents differed significantly from their estimate of the network respondents' and agency respondents' position on eight of the nine co-orientation items.

Implications of the Study

In recent years, government and business spokesmen have advocated a dialogue between key government, industry, and consumer groups to reduce friction and advance the general good. Yet, such a dialogue never happens. Rather, what passes for dialogue in form is only a sequence of monologues in fact, wherein each spokesman merely grants "equal time" to others and pretends to listen while actually preparing his own set of comments.

The findings of this study indicate that the lack of effective interaction between government, industry, and consumer spokesmen, at least regarding children's television advertising, is not due to a lack of understanding. The various groups included in the study do understand each other's positions on most issues remarkably well.

The findings indicate the critical need for industry spokesmen to establish an effective dialogue with government representatives and consumer spokesmen, particularly spokesmen for Action for Children's Television, if they hope to continue operating with the relative freedom they now enjoy. On almost every issue in the survey, the government respondents were on the side of the ACT respondents and not the side of the industry——a fact that has serious implications regarding present public opinion and potential legislation on the subject.

Although the study data supported most of the research hypotheses, the significant differences in attitude between the surveyed groups and the small amount of variance in attitude within the surveyed groups is probably a more

significant finding than the fact that the hypotheses were supported. The difference in attitudes between the industry respondents and the ACT and government respondents is so large that no publicity campaign or goodwill effort on the part of the industry is likely to have much effect on either group——at least not in the immediate future.

APPENDIX: Items Included in the Survey Instrument

1. Television advertising to children should be more regulated than it already is.
2. Advertising halps develop a child's ability to make good consumer decisions.
3. The quality of children's television would be better if it were not controlled by advertising dollars.
4. Commercials to children should be regulated by advertisers themselves.
5. There is nothing wrong with advertising vitamin tablets on children's television programs.
6. There are too many commercials on shows children watch.
7. Commercials often persuade children to want things they do not really need.
8. Most children's television commercials present a true picture of the product advertised.
9. *"Bunching"* commercials before or after a program would *significantly lessen the impact* of the advertiser's message.
10. *Performers* should be allowed to sell products on children's shows.
11. Television commercials aimed at children are *usually* in good taste.
12. Commercials on children's television programs are *often purposely disguised* to blend in with the programs.
13. Most children understand what commercials on children's shows are trying to do.
14. Simulcasts . . . (permitting two or more networks to run the same program at the same time) . . . would help improve the quality of children's television programming.
15. Children's television advertising requires *special* regulation because of the nature of the viewing audience.
16. The trade association guidelines in use today have done little to improve the quality of children's television advertising.
17. The advertising industry should sponsor a "Television Broadcast Center" to finance quality children's programs.
18. Commercials to children should be regulated by *the government*.
19. Most advertisers on children's television make a *sincere effort* to present their products truthfully.
20. New regulations should *restrict* the techniques used in advertising *toys*.

21. Stricter guidelines regarding the use of disclaimers . . . (such as batteries not included) . . . would improve many children's commercials.

22. Advertising on children's television programs should be banned *completely*.

23. Television commercials lead to an increase in parent-child conflict.

24. All commercials on children's television should be preceded by a notice stating that what is to follow is an ad.

25. Television commercials often arouse anxieties and feelings of insecurity in children.

26. Most advertisers are good people trying their best to provide what the public wants.

27. Most advertisers on children's television are not really concerned about kids; they just want to sell their products.

28. It is up to the parents to regulate children's television viewing behavior.

29. There is a connection between commercials for pharmaceuticals . . . and the nation's rising drug usage among young people.